

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2018

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, and Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jose Serrano
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, and Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano:

As Members of Congress with an interest in the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers and streams that feed it, we thank the Subcommittee for its legacy of leadership with respect to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Chesapeake Bay states are heavily invested in implementing a Blueprint designed to restore this national treasure. Federal partnership to support this complex, cross-state effort is key to their success. To maintain the trust and collaboration of state partners, we have identified essential programs at the Department of Commerce under National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in fiscal year 2019. We urge the Subcommittee to include level funding for these programs in the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill this year.

States in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed have been working together to restore this national treasure since 1983, when Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania signed the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement -- a voluntary, regional partnership to achieve the states' vision of an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay Watershed. That same year, Congress established the Chesapeake Bay Program to support this agreement. As a testament to the value of this federal-state partnership, all watershed states signed the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Under this Agreement, states and federal agencies have voluntarily committed to work together to restore water quality in the Bay by 2025. NOAA is a key federal partner in this initiative. The Agency contributes invaluable restoration and education programs and technical assistance through the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Program Office, and oversees the highly valuable native oyster protection and restoration strategy. The agency also provides coordinated and effective management of fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay region through its partnership with, and support of, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. These programs are important to restore the Bay ecosystem and bring the Bay back to life. We must maintain federal investment in the programs below to support state efforts and ensure their success.

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office

Within the Habitat Conservation and Restoration program, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office supports the Bay habitat monitoring, restoration and protection goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Scientific data from this office is critical for the management and restoration of oysters, blue crab, striped bass, and other ecologically and commercially important species; and for planning, management and assessment of Bay Program priorities. In addition, the office provides several invaluable public education programs,

including the Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program and the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System.

NOAA Office of Education/BWET program

NOAA's Chesapeake Bay office implements the Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET Chesapeake) program, which offers students and teachers the opportunity to learn about the scientific value and wonder of the Bay ecosystem first hand and is active in schools throughout the watershed.

National Sea Grant College Program

Sea Grant programs carry out vital research in the Chesapeake Bay. Activities include: university research on oyster diseases, oyster restoration, and oyster-related human health risks; research on the biology, prevention, and forecasting of harmful algal blooms; research, education, and extension services and activities focused on coastal resilience; university research on sustainable aquaculture. It also funds the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship which places Fellows in Congressional offices with a demonstrated interest.

Chesapeake Bay States have invested significant resources into restoring a national treasure. In fact, state investments continue to dwarf federal investments as the Office of Management and Budget reported to Congress in the Chesapeake Cross-cut Budget in October 2017. To maintain the spirit of trust and collaboration that is the hallmark of this successful federal-state partnership, it is essential to maintain consistent federal support for this effort. The Chesapeake Bay is showing great improvement. We thank you for supporting this essential partnership with Bay states in an extraordinary effort to restore our national treasure for current and future generations.

Sincerely,



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress



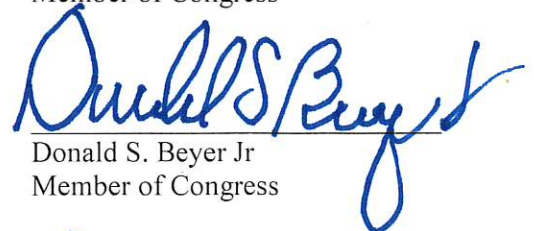
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



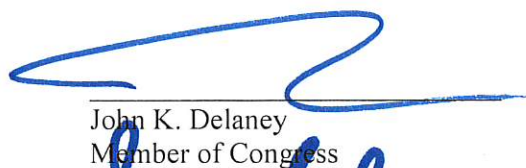
Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



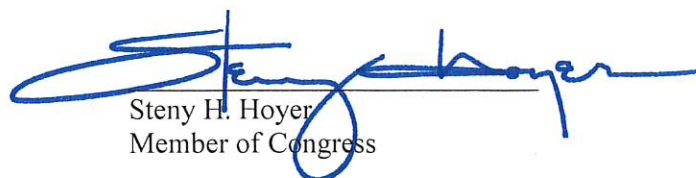
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



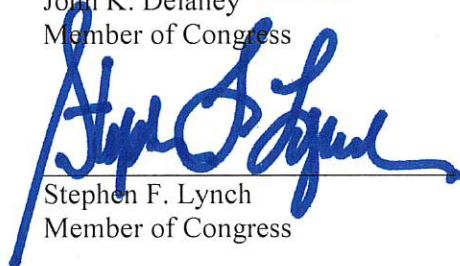
Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



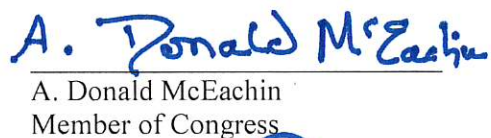
Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



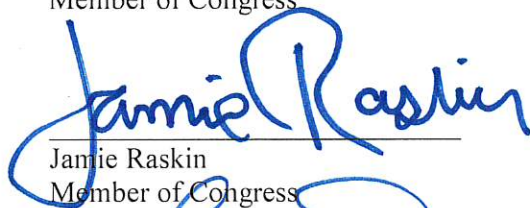
Tom Marino
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



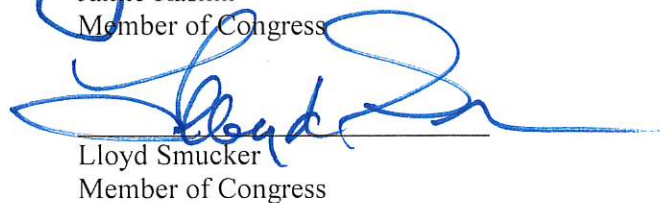
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress



Lloyd Smucker
Member of Congress